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ABSTRACT

Stages in the development of art expression in infants and toddlers are briefly described and illustrated in this paper. Following this overview, suggestions are made about ways to introduce infants and toddlers to various developmentally appropriate media and how to support the artistic efforts of very young children. Materials recommended include crayon, large kindergarten pencil, magic markers, chalk, cotton swabs and food coloring, and paper for scribbling. Tempera, finger paints, and water colors, as well as evaporated milk and colored tissue paper, are recommended materials for painting activities. Guides for sculptural mixed-media projects appropriate for children 2 years of age and older are also provided. In conclusion, suggestions for displaying and protecting children's artwork are offered, and references providing detailed information about stages in the development of art expression are listed in a short bibliography. (RH)

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ART AND THE INFANT-TODDLER CURRICULUM

PRESENTATION BY
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TO THE
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Contents

Scribble to Baseline: Stages in Development of Infant-Toddler Art Expression 2

Media for the Infant-Toddler Curriculum 8
- Crayon 8
- Large Kindergarten Pencil 8
- Magic Markers 9
- Chalk 9
- Cue Tips and Food Color 9
- Paper for Scribbling 10
- Painting 10
  - Tempera 10
  - Finger Painting 11
  - Water Colors 11
  - Evaporated Milk and Colored Tissue Paper 11
- Sculpture 12
- Mixed Media Projects 13
  - Printing 13
  - Cutting or Tearing and Pasting 13
  - Collage 14
  - Straw Painting 14
  - Combination of Media 14

Displaying and Protecting Art Work 15

Bibliography 16

ART AND THE INFANT-TODDLER CURRICULUM

Very little has been written about children's art experiences from 6 to 36 months of age. Art can play an important role in a curriculum for infants and toddlers. Infant art expression is valuable for motor coordination, language development, and emotional development. For an infant art program to work, there must be appropriate materials and encouragement and supervision. Knowledge about early art work can also help to assess developmental levels, if the care giver is familiar with the stages of scribbling the child goes through from the time he* does his first scribbles until he makes his first symbolic drawings. The conferees will be given suggestions on how to introduce various media to infants and toddlers at the appropriate developmental levels and how to be supportive of early artistic efforts.

* For the sake of simplicity, the pronoun "he" will be used throughout to signify children of both sexes.

SCRIBBLE TO BASELINE: STAGES IN DEVELOPMENT OF INFANT-TODDLER ART EXPRESSION

If a child is provided with the appropriate materials and encouragement, his scribbles will evolve through several stages between the time he first puts a mark on paper and the time that he makes his first symbolic drawing.

No one needs to show him how to draw a circle or symbols for people. As he develops control of his body and the environment, his drawings will become more controlled until his first symbolic drawing occurs.

This process is illustrated in the following outline of the evolutionary stages all children travel through in their discovery of artistic expression.

Early uncontrolled scribbles:
No boundaries--varying amounts of pressure
(16-24 months).

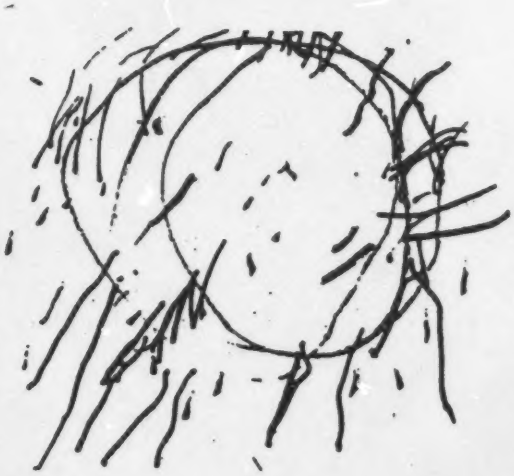
Controlled scribbles:
Horizontal and vertical
(18-36 months).

Circular scribbles become more and more controlled (18-36 months).

Child begins to name his scribbles.

3

One large circle evolves with rays.



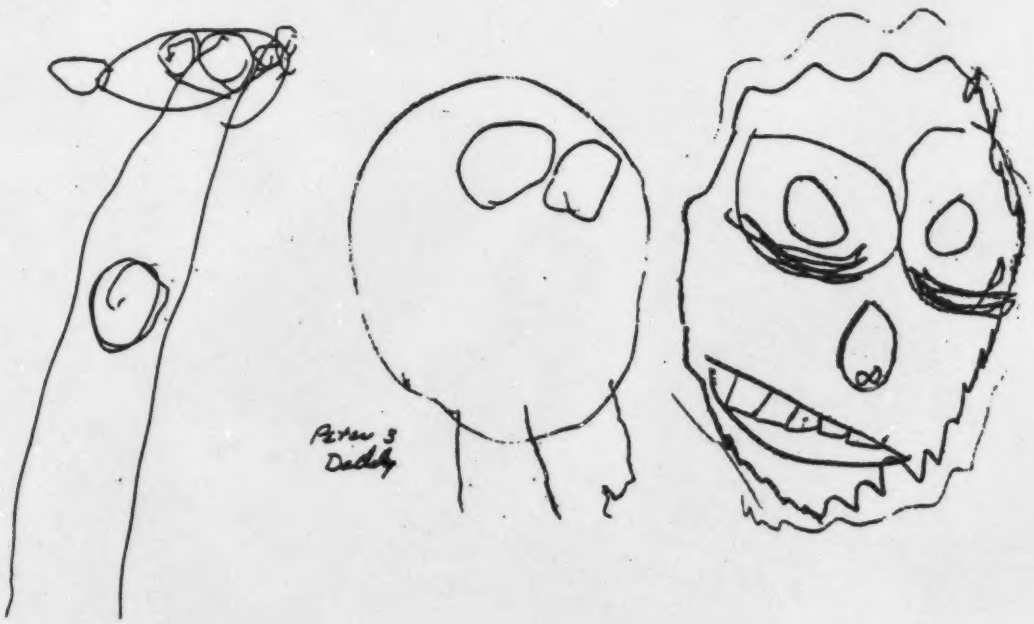
Soon after, the first symbolic drawing occurs.

This is a very important moment when the child realizes that his drawing <u>is</u> somebody or something.

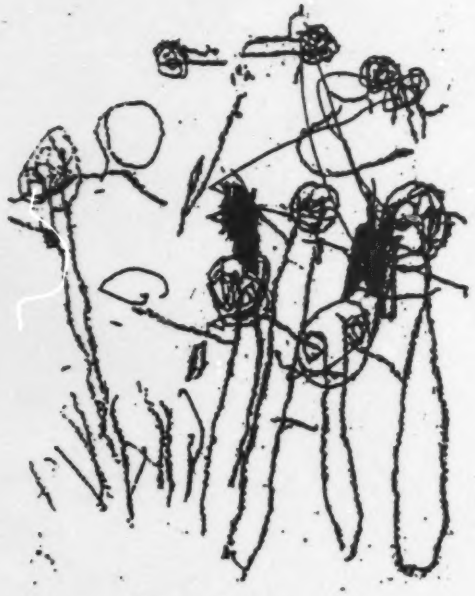
It is especially joyful if he has discovered it all by himself, if no one has shown him how to draw a person or a dog or a tree.

This way, whatever it is, it is his <u>own</u> symbol and there is no other like it.

Now he can draw anything, Mommy, Daddy, the dog, or even a lion.



At first, his symbols are all over the page--upside down, right side up, sideways.



They become more complex as he notices body details such as eyelashes, fingers, shoelaces, bellybuttons, and teeth.

Gradually, the symbols fall into place and the typical "kindergarten" picture occurs with baseline or skyline or both.

This is a very brief outline of what actually occurs. There is a great deal more detail in the books mentioned in the bibliography.

As the various stages occur, it is possible to see the amount of control the child is developing and how he sees his environment. When he first gets on his feet, his world is a little unstable and there have been no limits to his activity; as he gets steadier, he develops more control and limits occur in his drawings. He finds he controls the crayons or other medium he is using and soon he can express an abstract idea in symbolic form. He can illustrate a story. Sometimes he expresses a feeling or a rhythm. These are all things that come from within. We can produce the materials, but if we tell the child what to draw or how to draw we are limiting his own expression of what he feels or sees. If we draw for him, he soon gets the idea that what he draws is not nearly as good as what Mommy draws or what is drawn for him in a coloring book or mimeographed form. He will soon stop drawing and only copy what others do.

I feel that a child's "art work" is the "scribble of his soul." It is his own expression of an inner feeling. Other media activities, including early attempts at pasting, printing, and even painting, are interesting scientifically for richness, texture, shape, etc., but scribbling and drawing are the work he does to prepare himself for expressing abstract ideas in symbolic form. When the baseline appears, he usually is also able to tie his shoes. His world has fallen into place and now he is ready for formal learning and he is controlled enough to put a circle between two lines.

MEDIA FOR THE INFANT-TODDLER CURRICULUM
(COLOR SLIDE PRESENTATION)

At 16 to 18 months, the child still needs a lot of supervision in all areas. When a child is given crayons, he should be provided with a place to scribble. The paper is more easily handled if it is taped to a board or table or a similar surface to be scribbled on.

The child is beginning to learn there are limits to what he can do. This also applies to his art work. If it is not supervised, he will scribble all over the walls or anything available. Sometimes children will scribble with a stick in the sand - or a stone on the sidewalk, if no other media is available. By giving him a place to scribble and by supervising closely at first until he learns how to handle the crayons, you will help him to enjoy a freedom within limits that will always characterize his way of going about his work.

It is not recommended that any art work be done in a group at this age. It should be available on a table or at an easel and one or two can work at a time, but it is too hard to supervise more. Also, it is an individual expression and children should not be encouraged to compare their work with one another.

Crayon

Usually the first attempts at scribbling are done with crayon. The simpler the medium at this time, the better. Stubby chunk crayons without paper on them are the best because they do not distract the child. If you have the large kindergarten crayons, remove the paper from the crayons.

Large Kindergarten Pencil

The large kindergarten pencil is satisfying for a child to scribble with because it doesn't require as much pressure as a crayon, but this activity should be supervised as it is a bit dangerous because of the point. Ball point pens are more dangerous and are not recommended.

Magic Markers

Magic markers can be introduced at 18 to 24 months, depending on how well the child has learned to use crayons on paper. They are satisfying because they are so colorful and easy to use. Two-year-olds can learn to use one at a time and to put the tops back on so they won't dry out. The children learn to do this as it is a manipulative challenge. Use only two or three colors at a time so the choice is not overwhelming. Here again is freedom within limits.

Chalk

Many mothers find this a good medium to use at home because the marks are easy to clean if chalk is used inappropriately. The adults can provide a chalk board and white chalk and these can be used with little supervision. Colored chalk is also satisfying, but again start with two or three colors. A variation of drawing with chalk is to wet the paper with a sponge and draw on wet paper. Chalk drawings can be preserved by spraying them with fixative or hair spray.

Cue Tips and Food Color

You will need:

Cue tips
Food color diluted with a small amount of water
An ice cube tray--put one color in each cube space. Put one cue tip in each color

Drawing with cue tips dipped in food color can be almost as satisfying as magic markers for the two-year-old. It must be closely supervised at first, as the child needs to learn to put the cue tip back in the same color and to leave an end to hold in his fingers. With cue tips, you don't need to worry about a tip being spoiled by pressing too hard or scribbling with it as you do with magic markers. Cue tips can be used to decorate birthday hats or place mats or kites. They can also be used to color eggs.

Paper for Scribbling

You can use almost any kind of paper for scribbling--computer paper, shelf paper, newsprint, paper bags, wrapping paper. It is confusing to the beginning scribbler, however, if the paper is already printed on (for example, a regular newspaper). It is important to provide lots of empty sheets as a child can be very prolific; even though the drawings look the same, they represent a kind of "drill work" that strengthens a child's control of his scribbles as he develops fine motor control.

Painting

Supplies needed to outfit a young painter include:

Large brushes
Easel
Non-spill containers
Smock

Different types of paints recommended for use in an infant-toddler program are described in the following.

Tempera

Usually you start with a good thick tempera paint that comes already mixed or one that you mix yourself, Be sure the mix is almost pudding-like consistency as it is difficult for toddlers to cope with dripping paint, let alone get the brush on the paper. Adding a little detergent to the mixture will make it easier to wash out of clothing. It is preferable to let infants paint at an easel and not on the floor as they tend to step in it and tip over the containers on the floor. Again, use one color at first and then two as the painting becomes more controlled. You can vary the colors with the seasons and also vary the size and shape of the paper.

Finger Paint

Sometimes the 16- to 20-month-old child will not want to finger paint, especially if he has been scolded for messing in food or playing with his B.M. Usually the two-year-olds enjoy it and by that time they can differentiate between messing in finger paint and other things that are inappropriate. It can help to satisfy their urge to mess. It helps to have a special place to use finger paints such as a messy play tray or just an ordinary tray. You can mix your paint from a variety of recipes or you can buy it already mixed. The process is more important than the result, but sometimes children enjoy a print made of a scribble they have done in finger paint. To make the print, place a piece of paper on top of the completed finger painting before it dries and press down.

Finger paint recipe:

2 cups flour
2 tsp. salt
3 cups cold water
2 cups hot water
1-1/4 cups liquid food dye
For rich color, use 1/4 cup of dye per cup of the above mixture.

Mix the salt and flour in a saucepan, pour in cold water, and beat the mixture by hand or with an egg beater until it is smooth. Add hot water and bring to a boil. Simmer mixture until it becomes clear. Beat it again until smooth, let it cool, and then mix in the dye.

Water Colors

These are not as satisfying as tempera for children of this age. They are more difficult to use and colors are not as well defined.

Evaporated Milk and Colored Tissue Paper

This is a very satisfying medium for children over 18 months who have learned to use a brush. This technique employs skills the children have already learned and the results are aesthetically beautiful. Tear tissue into small pieces, place them on construction paper (or whatever you need to cover), and "paint" them in place using evaporated milk to make the tissue adhere to the base. This technique is also effective in decorating holiday cards and ornaments.

Sculpture

Development of the sculpture of young children is the same as that of their scribbles in that uncontrolled manipulation of the medium evolves into controlled manipulation and finally into the depiction of recognizable objects. Again, we do not make patterns for the children, but allow them to manipulate dough or plasticene until they arrive at something that is their own symbol.

Salt Dough

For early attempts, salt dough is the best medium. It is easy to manipulate and it is not toxic. Children will especially enjoy using this type of "play dough" in the housekeeping corner of a playroom. Don't be surprised if you find them fashioning entire "banquets" out of this material.

Salt dough recipe:

2 cups flour
1 cup salt
water to make bread dough consistency
1 tbsp. oil
food color

Blend ingredients by hand. No cooking is required. Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Cornstarch Clay

A type of dough that will turn hard can be used during holiday seasons for special projects such as Christmas tree ornaments.

Cornstarch clay recipe:

2 cups salt
1 cup cornstarch
1-1/3 cup water

Combine ingredients in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat until mixture thickens (be especially careful that dough does not become too hard too quickly at this stage). Cool. Knead and store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Plasticene

Plasticene will appeal to some two-year-olds. It can be used like play dough but is harder to manipulate. Start with one color and then add more as the children lean to manipulate it.

Mixed Media Projects

Children engaged in mixed-media projects as these will enjoy scientific, manipulative, and sensory exploration of a variety of materials. These activities are appropriate for older children aged two and older.

Printing

Supplies:

- Sponge with clothespins attached
- Plastic muffin tins to hold paints of various colors
- Paper

Technique:

Dip sponge in paint, holding clothespin end, and dab sponge end on paper.

Other materials to print with:

- String
- Fruit or vegetables (cut)
- Anything with a design that can be dipped in paint and pressed on a paper

Cutting or Tearing and Pasting

Supplies:

- Construction paper
- Small pieces to tear or cut
- Large piece to paste on
- Scissors
- Paste (try different kinds)
  - Library paste
  - Flour and water paste
  - Elmer's glue

Technique:

Cut or tear construction paper into pieces. Paste onto large sheets of paper.

Paper Sculpture: After the children learn to tear or cut paper, let them paste sculptural pieces of paper (curls, spirals, folds) onto a cardboard base.

Collage

Working with collage will enable children to become acquainted with a variety of materials of different color, texture, size, and shape. Themes may be inspired by special events in the life of a chil, the changing seasons, and holiday celebrations.

Supplies:

- Nature collage: seed pods, leaves, and flowers
- Other kinds of collage:
  - "Beautiful junk"
  - Tissue paper
  - Dried vegetables
  - Packing materials
- Technique:
  - Paste materials on a piece of paper or cardboard or a paper plate with Elmer's glue.
  - Present materials in trays or dishes sorted according to color, size, shape, type of material.
  - Provide close supervision so that the children do not put tiny pieces in their mouths, ears, or noses.

Straw Painting

Put drops of paint or food color on paper with eye dropper. Blow on it through a straw and watch it spread out and make a pretty design.

Combination of Media

After most types of media have been introduced and children have learned their use, try different media in combination:

For example,

- drawing or scribbling and collage,
- sculpture and collage, and
- scribbling and printing.

Adding the child's scribble to a mixed media project makes it his expression of an abstract idea in the media he has chosen.

DISPLAYING AND PROTECTING ART WORK

As we supervise children's art work, we are building attitudes and also self-concept. There are ways in which we can help children to feel good about their work.

Children like to see their work displayed. Try to mount the pictures you display so that they will look more attractive. Children and parents feel that the work is more valuable if someone takes the time to mount it.

You cannot mount all of the drawings, so it is good to have a portfolio for each child. This can simply be a large piece of construction paper folded in half or it can be made more elaborately with poster board, or even cloth, taped together. Collect the child's art work in the portfolio. The child will have a sense of self-worth and the parents will have a record of the child's development in his early scribbles.

The child should not feel he has to take some art work home every day. The process is more important to him than the product. If he does take a picture or a collage home, however, be sure to protect it from the weather with a plastic bag. In this way, you let him know you value his work.

Do not write the child's name in big letters on his picture; sometimes he feels you are spoiling his picture when you write on it and he will even paint over the name. Write very small in pencil and then put his name on the back with the date and any story he tells about the picture.

To foster appreciation of good form, color, and other elements of art, have objects in the room that are representational of good design: toys, books, and sculptural objects from nature such as stones, shells, and wood. Copies of paintings and sculpture by artists such as Klee, Picasso and Calder will acquaint the child with bold forms, vivid colors, fanciful subjects, and other elements that will capture his imagination and inspire artistic development.

If you have a child or work with children you have the rare opportunity to see the world as he sees it. Do not impose adult standards on this work. Just enjoy it.

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